A

CLEAR PROOF

OF THE

CERTAINTY and USEFULNESS

OF THE

Protestant Rule of Faith,

SCRIPTURE,

After the Help of

Ministerial Guides,

Finally Interpreted by *Each Man's* Private Sense.

Published with Allowance.

LONDON,

Printed by *Henry Hills*, Printer to the King's Most Excellent Majesty, for His Houshold and Chappel; And are to be sold at his Printing-house on the *Ditch-side* in *Black-Fryers*. 1688.

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A Clear Proof of the Certainty and Usefulness of the Protestant Rule of Faith, Scripture, *after the Help of* Ministerial Guides, *finally Interpreted by* each Man's *private Sense.*

THis proof is drawn from the Answer to the Address presented to the *Ministers of the Church of England.* The Author thereof had mentioned that clear and plain Texts of Scripture were offer'd, which interpreted in the *Protestant-way*, by those who receive it thus expounded for their whole Rule of Faith, should so prove the two principal Articles of Christian Belief, the *Trinity* and the *Incarnation* of *Christ*, as also the Obligation of keeping holy the *Sunday*, and not *Saturday*, as one of the Commandments seems to require; and that so convincingly, that a *Christian* might ground on them his Faith. Interpreted, I say, in the Protestant-way, without any *deciding* Church-Authority when doubts arise about the sense of the Letter.

The Addresser holds, (if he be a Catholic) That Scripture, rightly understood, is a *Rule of Faith*: That the Gospel revealed by *Christ*, preached by the *Apostles*, and preserved by the Catholic Church, is so much one *Whole Rule of Faith*, that we own with *Tertullian*, *we need not be curiously searching since Christ, nor further inquisitive since the Gospel was preach'd.* No new Revelations, no new Articles being receiv'd as of *Catholic Faith*; but those Truths only retained, which the Church proposes as delivered to her by the Apostles,

De Præsc.

her whole Authority being ever employ'd, as Pope *Celeſtine* delivers it to the Council of *Epheſus*, in *providing that what was delivered, and preſerved in a continual Succeſſion from the Apoſtles, be retained:* So that *nothing is of Faith, but what God revealed by the Prophets and the Apoſtles, or what evidently follows from it*; the Catholic Church ever handing it to us, and declaring it to be ſo.

Ep. 7.

Scripture thus interpreted is a Catholic Rule of Faith: The *Addreſſer* therefore meant nothing leſs than to diminiſh its Divine Authority; his deſign was to preſerve it, and that each man's private ſenſe might not ſacrilegiouſly pretend to be that *Word of God*, which, as St. *Peter* minds us, *is not of private Interpretation*: 'Tis not againſt the Authority or Uſe of Scripture he writ, but againſt the Proteſtants unjuſt and inſignificant method of uſing it. I will here make good the Charge, (hoping that, when he thinks fit, he will much more fully perform it) by the very Anſwers given to his Queſtions, which I ſhall ſet down in that Order and Senſe in which the Anſwerer conſtrued them.

Qu. 1. *Whether all things neceſſary to Salvation are contained in Scripture?*

Anſ. *Scripture muſt contain theſe neceſſaries.*

All Catholics ever owned what St. *Auguſtin* teaches, That *all things which concern Faith and Manners of Life are found in thoſe things which are plainly contained in Scripture*; So that, as St. *Gregory* expreſſes it, *God needs ſpeak to us no more* by any new Revelation. For, as the ſame St. *Auguſtin* obſerves in the Queſtion betwixt Him and the *Donatiſts*, about true Baptiſm, which he held *abſolutely* neceſſary to Salvation, *Tho' we have no proof in this caſe from holy Scripture, yet we follow the truth of holy Scripture even in this caſe, when we do what the Univerſal preſent Church approves of, which Church is commended by the Authority of the very Scripture.* But the caſe in this firſt Queſtion, as it appears ſtated by the Addreſſer, is, Whether all things neceſſary to Salvation are *immediatly* and *expreſly* contain'd in Scripture, or drawn thence by an *evident* Conſequence? Our Anſwerer proves they are ſo by the three following Texts; his Proofs I will ſet in a due form, that their force may lie open to all.

De Doctr. Ch. l. 2. c. 9.

The

The first Text is taken out of *John* 20. 31. where the *Evangelist* having premised, (v. 30.) *Many other signs also did Jesus in the sight of his Disciples, which are not written in this Book*; says, v. 31. *These* (which he had set down) *are written that you may believe that Jesus is Christ the Son of God, and that believing you may have Life in his name.* Now what Conclusion can be drawn from this Text to our present purpose, but one, in one of these two forms? First thus: *The signs set down by St.* John, ch. 20. *are sufficient to make us believe that Jesus is Christ the Son of God; but precisely to believe that Jesus is Christ the Son of God, is all that is necessary to have Life in his name, or to Salvation; therefore the 20th. Chapter of St.* John *contains all things necessary to Salvation.* Or else thus, in the Answerer's words: *All that is as sufficient in its kind to beget Faith in us, as Faith is to save us, contains all things necessary to Salvation: But the 20th. Chapter of St.* John's *Gospel, as it appears by* ver. 31. *is as sufficient to beget Faith in us; therefore that 20th. Chapter contains all things necessary to Salvation.* A special piece of Logic! However his Conclusion eases the Members of his Congregation from the obligation of reading any part of Scripture besides the 20th. Chapter of St. *John*'s Gospel.

The second Text of Scripture is, 2 *Tim.* 3. 15, 16. where the Apostle having thus warned *Timothy* immediatly before, v. 14. *Continue in those things which thou hast learnt, and are committed to thee, knowing of whom thou hast learnt*; by which words he renews the commands he had given him, *O* Timothy! *keep the depositum*; *have a form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in Faith:* The said Apostle minds him that in his Infancy he had read the Old Testament, which bears sufficiently witness that Christ was the Messias, v. 15, 16. *Because from thine infancy thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which can instruct thee* (the Protestant Version hath, *make thee wise*) *to Salvation by the Faith that is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture inspired of God is* profitable *to teach, to argue, to correct, to instruct in Justice, that the man of God may be perfect, instructed to every good work.* Hence the Minister argues thus: *The same Apostle that says all Scripture,* (*i.e.* each part of Scripture) *is given by Inspiration of God, says that the Scriptures are*

1 *Tim.* 6. 20.
2 *Tim.* 1. 13.

able

able to make us wise to Salvation: But men cannot be wise to Salvation, without knowing what is necessary to Salvation. Here he leaves us, but I will make up the Syllogism: *Therefore the Old Testament alone, nay every part of Scripture, contains all things necessary to Salvation.* Thus you see the Minister rests satisfied with the first Chapter of *Genesis* for his *whole Rule of Faith.* The truth is, that St. *Paul* only teaches there that the Testament, or any part of Scripture, is of good use, is *profitable* to instruct any one in the concerns of his Salvation. What's this to the containing of all necessaries to Salvation? Bread is of very good use to preserve Life, and enables a man to perform all the duties of it; is therefore nothing else necessary? What pitiful shifts are these!

His third Proof is this: Christ sent the young man who put that Question to him, *Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal Life?* to the Commandments, *Thou knowest the Commandments*; and again declared that *Moses* and the *Prophets* were sufficient to dispose a sinner to repent. Behold another Logical Inference of great credit to the University this Answerer was brought up in! *By reading* Moses *and the Prophets I am moved to repent from my sins; and if I will know what I must do to inherit eternal Life, I must know the Commandments; therefore all things necessary to Salvation are contained in Scripture.* I may with Justice return to this man more than what he ungroundedly says to the Addresser, p. 1. *That he takes up with such a sort of Arguments, which, tho' not useful to make any of his Religion, may very well make others of none.* If such use only could be made of Scripture, it would be of no use at all to our Salvation; no senseless Heresie hath appear'd these 1600 years, which was not back'd by more seeming Proofs from Scripture than these.

Luc. 10. 25.
Luc. 16. 29.

Q. 2. *Whether all things necessary to Salvation are clearly contained in Scripture?*

Ans. From Scripture, *not a word.*

However he condescends to deliver His sense and that of his Church on this Question: It is, That all persons cannot *immediately* learn all the necessaries to Salvation by *meer reading* of Scripture; that many other helps are *necessary*, to wit, *attention, consideration*, to be cleared from *prejudices* and *prepossessions*,

poſſeſſions, from *pride*, *love of the world*, *intereſt*, *obſtinacy*, *partiality*, *ſloth*; and beſides all this, the aſſiſtance of *teaching Guides*, and a *dependency* from God for the Wiſdom he hath promiſed, (ſuch promiſes I find made to the Church, but not any to particulars that ſhall refuſe to be abſolutely guided by the Church:) *So that Scripture is plain in this ſenſe only, that by theſe means it may be apprehended.* Now by *Guides* he means not falſe ones, ſuch as Chriſt bid us beware of, and *Mat. 7. 15.* conſequently till a Proteſtant hath a reaſonable conviction that his Church-Teachers, tho' divided from the Catholic Church, and condemned by General Councils, tho' Abettors of a Religion of not 150 years ſettlement, tho' not in Communion with *one* Biſhop in the whole World out of His Majeſty's Dominions, yet ſtill are *true Guides*; and till he be morally ſure that he wants not himſelf any one of the ten other diſpoſitions requir'd, is to perſuade himſelf that he may very well be one of thoſe who *wreſt* the Scripture *to their perdition*, and conſequently hath no good ground for any one Act of Faith. This will create but ſmall comfort to any Proteſtant. Leſs yet will he find in St. *Cyril*'s Sentence, *The things that are eaſie are yet to Heretics hard to underſtand*; eſpecially if all thoſe be Heretics, according to St. *Auguſtin*, *who when the Doctrin of Catholic Faith is declared to them, chuſe to oppoſe it, and rather embrace what is their own ſenſe*; if the Catholic Faith be, according to the ſame Dr. *a Communion with the whole world*, ſo that, according as his Scholar St. *Proſper* defines it, *a Chriſtian when in Communion with this General Church, is a Catholic*; *when ſeparated from her an Heretic.* I wonder how this man was ſo confident as to name that word *Heretic*, which his Brethren are uſually as much afraid to mention, as a Murtherer to come up to the murder'd Corps, leſt by its bleeding he be betray'd.

In Jo. l. 1. c. 4.

L. 4. de Bapt. cont. Don. c. 16.

L. 2. cont. Gaud. In Lim H.

Q. 3. *What are the neceſſaries to Salvation?*

Here plain and full Scripture will be of great uſe, we may expect ſhoals of Texts: What anſwer from Scripture is given to this Queſtion think you? E'en the ſame as honeſt *Bays* returns to a hard one in the *Rehearſal*, *Y Gad I won't tell you.* No, he gives not one word of anſwer to it, tho' it be ſo material. Any one may gueſs at the reaſon without caſting a figure.

Q. 4.

Q. 4. 'Tis in its whole extent this: *By what Text of Scripture are we plainly taught that God is One in Substance, Three in Person? For as,* John 10. 30. *Christ says,* I and my Father are One; *so* 17. 21. *he prays,* That all Believers may be One, as He and his Father are One: *This second place may seem to expound the first, and then Christ and his Father will be One only morally, as all the Believers be One. Or else, what Text declares the Three Persons to be One by identity of substance?*

Ans. Not one Text of Scripture, to give us the dubious sense of the two in question! And yet these men pretend to clear Scripture for each Fundamental Point! The Answerer supplies this want of Scripture with two Reasons. The first is this: *Of the Three that bear record in Heaven, 'tis said they* are *One; but of the Three that bear witness on Earth, they* agree *in one.* (I will admit this English Translation, tho' Apocryphal.) But what then? *But if in both were meant only a Moral Union, it would have been as well said of the Three that bear record in Heaven, they* agree *in One; therefore they have more than a Moral Union.* Is not this special Logic? Would not this way of arguing prove equally that the *Believers* are one with more than a Moral Union, because otherwise it might as well have been said, *Jo.* 17. *May they agree in one.* The Question is, Whether this second clear Text concerning the Three that bear witness on Earth, and which we know to be only *Morally One,* doth not expound what that Unity is that is found in the Three which bear record in Heaven? We ask a proof out of Scripture to decide this doubt; but our Answerer hath none to give us, or is grown churlish, and will not allow us any. Hath he any to expound the other Text? No, not any; but he offers at some insinuation from Scripture, and 'tis this: *When Christ said,* I and my Father are One, *the* Jews *took up stones to stone him for blasphemy, because that thou being a Man (said they) makest thy self God: The* Jews *then understood him to have spoken of a Natural Union, therefore he did so.* Well, I will let my good Nature work upon me once, and for quiets sake I will let this Discourse pass as allowable: But in return of curtesie I hope each sober Protestant will own this following Argument to be of at least as good Alloy: *When Christ said,* Jo. 6. Unless

Unleſs you eat the Fleſh of the Son of Man, you have no life in you; *the* Jews, *who ſaid how can this man give us his Fleſh to eat? and his Diſciples, who walked no more with him, underſtood that he ſpake of his natural Body which they ſhould corporally eat; therefore Chriſt did really mean they ſhould corporally feed on his natural Fleſh.* This Popiſh Concluſion is in the ſame Form.

Q. 5. *Is the Myſtery of the Incarnation of Chriſt clearly expreſt in Scripture?* Or can it be clearly made out by Scripture, that thoſe words, *John* 1. *The Word was made Fleſh*, own'd by all Chriſtians to be true, are to be underſtood in ſuch ſenſe that Both Natures were in One Perſon, ſo that what is ſaid of the *Man* Chriſt Jeſus be truly ſaid of the Son of God; for example, that the B. Virgin was *Mother of God*; and not as the *Neſtorians* underſtood them, to wit, that Chriſt was indeed a *true man, made of the Seed of David*; and that the Eternal Word, true God, was indeed in him, but not by a ſtrict Perſonal Union?

Anſ. Not one word from Scripture. What indeed all the *Neſtorians* ſuppoſed, he proves; but as to the Unity of One Perſon uniting theſe two Natures, not *one word*. This man (any one may ſee) is of thoſe who take the *Neſtorians* to be a part of the Catholic Church; and no one will grudge their Congregation the Title of *ſuch a part* of the Cath. Church, that is a Member ſever'd from the One Body of Chriſt.

Q. 6. The *firſt* branch of this Queſtion is, What Scripture hath abſolv'd us from obeying one of the Commandments, which impoſes the keeping of *Saturday* holy? The *ſecond*, What Text of Scripture exacts of us the keeping holy (as the Lord's day) the *Sunday*?

Anſ. To the firſt part, not one word of Scripture; and for excuſe he tells us, That *there was no need of an expreſs abrogation*, becauſe *Sunday being ſet apart for the public and ſolemn Worſhip of God, the Sabboth-day, as well as the Holydays and New-moons of the* Jews *being a ſhadow, muſt ſurrender to the Sunday*. Here is as little Reaſon as Scripture; for the Sabboth did appertain to the Law of Nature, and was not a ſhadow only of a thing to come, but a memory of the paſt and never-to-be-forgotten benefit of the *Creation*, from the *Gen.* 2. 3.

work whereof God reſted on that day, and *bleſſed the ſeventh day.* Here 'tis pity at what a loſs the Anſwerer is to find the Chapter and Verſe wherein the abrogation of Circumciſion is clearly expreſt: 'Tis a charitable condeſcendency to inſtruct him; let him look then in *Gal.* 5. 2. where *behold* Paul *tells you, that if you be circumciſed, Chriſt ſhall profit you nothing.*

For the ſecond part, he produces a Text, *Rev.* 1. 10. *I was in ſpirit on the Lord's day*; then he flouriſhes to teach us ignorant people, that *'tis uſual in Scripture, after that Times, Places, Things and Perſons were ſet apart for the ſervice of God by Divine Inſtitution, to have his Name as a mark of propriety given to them.* But in the name of ſenſe and reaſon what means all this? There is a Lord's day, no doubt; St. *John* was in ſpirit that day, 'tis certain: But the queſtion is, *What day of the week* was it? or was it only ſome peculiar day of the year, as *Eaſter-day*, or *Good-friday?* Hath he Scripture for this? Not one word. I find forty Texts that call the day of general Judgment, or that of each man's death, the *Lord's day*, but not one that mentions *Sunday* under that name. I find, *Act.* 2. 46. *how they that believed were* daily *continuing with one accord in the Temple, or breaking Bread from houſe to houſe*, but not a word of a day appointed for *ſtated* Aſſemblies.

Scripture failing our Adverſary, he ſeeks ſupplies from Reaſon; but the misfortune is, that the firſt and chiefeſt he offers at ſtands againſt him: *The Moral Sabboth* (ſays he) in the *Patriarchal* Church, and the *Ceremonial* in the *Jewiſh* Church, were on the days following the Creation and Deliverance from the Slavery of *Ægypt.* True, but what follows? Therefore 'tis not to be kept by Chriſtians on the day in which Chriſt reſted after he had accompliſh'd our Redemption on the Croſs by a ſolemn *Conſummatum eſt*, and his precious Death? Not on *Saturday?* Raillery aſide, what can be (I will not ſay more dull, but) ſpoken more directly in ſpight of ſenſe and reaſon?

Q. 7. *Am I bound to believe* (the ſenſe given to a doubtful Text) *becauſe my Guides tell me I muſt do ſo?*

Anſ. *No*, plainly No: And he hath two Texts for it; the

the first, 2 *Cor.* 1. 24. *Not for that we have dominion over your Faith, but are helpers*, says St. *Paul*; and *Mat.* 23. 8. *Call no man Master on earth, for one is your Master.* Here not only the Walls of the City of God are broken down, but the very Foundations (of *Prophets* and *Apostles*) are digg'd up; is it all St. *Paul* could do, all you allow him, to give *some light, some helps*, when his Proselytes had any doubt about the sense of Scripture? Were they not oblig'd to believe the Sense and Interpretation *He* gave to the Text? Then that Faith is vain which was founded on the Apostles Preaching, and all Christianity stands on a wrong bottom.

Now our Answerer takes his turn to ask Questions. He tells us that for the first he has a *pinching one*: 'Tis this: *If I must know the Church by some Marks or Notes, then I must find those Marks first; and where must I seek them?* This is pinching indeed! Suppose in a *Gazette* I should find some marks of a man that is sought for, were it not a severe objection against the man who gave them, and a pinching Question, *I must find these Marks before I find the man, and where shall I find them?* I conceive such *pinching* would force a smile, and this Answer, *Why Friend the Marks and the Man are found at once, for they are to be seen in his face.* At the same time as one takes a view of the Catholic Church, he sees therein a continual Succession of Bishops and Teachers from the Apostles; he discovers her in all parts of the World, and finds her thus *Catholic*; he sees in her an undivided Faith, Union under one Pastor in the use of the same Sacraments, and finds her *One*; he observes her Rule is, *Let nothing be alter'd* of what was receiv'd from the Apostles by a constant Universal *Tradition* in the Churches which they founded, and is convinced she is *Apostolical*: he finds God favours her with the Gift of *Miracles*, promised *Matt.* 10. and *Joh.* 14. that she hath fulfilled the Prophesies concerning the *Conversion of Nations*, converted to Christianity by her Children only; and he concludes this is she.

'Tis also observable at what a distance these men are from the true Church, who conceive it so hard to find her out. All holy Fathers ever judged it a most easie thing to each person, insomuch that the holy Doctor St. *Augustin* thus

Cc. 2. in Psal. 30. thus delivers his sense of it: *I tell you with truth, Brethren, th Prophets have spoken* more obscurely *of Christ, than of th Church: I believe because they saw in spirit that men would mak* Sects *against the Church, but would not be so much divided abou Christ.* But 'tis natural for a Criminal to question the Powe of his Judge; and these men know it hath ever been th sense of all Christians, which St. *Augustin* expres't in the fol lowing words: *There is no Salvation out of the Church, wh doubts of it? therefore whatever you have from the Churc (Scripture, Creed,* Sacraments, *&c.) help you not to Salvatio out of the Church, whether you believe contrary to the Truth, o being divided from the Unity, gather not with Christ; whenc St.* Paul *says to Heretics, Those who do such things, shall no possess the Kingdom of Heaven.*

De Unit. Eccl. l. 4. c. 18.

Gal. 5.

His other Quære's have no difficulty, and withal so littl of sense, that I shall not offer to force my Readers attenti on on them.

All well-meaning Protestants finding that Scripture inter preted the *Protestant-way* is so far from being an easie an clear Rule of Faith, that a Protestant in the Answer to a Address made to the Ministers of the Church of *England*, ap proved by a Chaplain to the highest Ecclesiastical Authorit under the King, cannot as much as teach by it the first Prin ciples of Christian Religion; will seek a better method o using that *Divine Rule*, and not be hereafter so easily impo sed upon by those Guides who give them but their own *pri vate fancies* under the Veil and Name of the *Word of God* I was (I confess) surpriz'd to find *Guil. Needham*, &c. appro ving this Answer; but God and Truth are of our side: *E inimici nostri sunt Judices*; the weakness of our Oppose Arguments bear a proof to it.

Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam.

F I N I S.